

and another of his patients, the late Michael Callen, to write a call by and for gay men to protect themselves. "You must celebrate gay sex in your writing and give men support," Sonnabend counsels. Despite this advice, Berkowitz and Callen give in to the widespread panic and their own health concerns while descending into a world of condemnations of promiscuity. Turning away from the libertine existences they have lived, Berkowitz begins to imagine himself and Callen as the Carrie Nations of gaydom. Slowly, Berkowitz recognizes this approach will not work. If one asks gay men, much less anyone else to give up sex, the result is usually anger. All or nothing propositions result in variations between hysteria, repression and inevitable lapses.

Within all this, Berkowitz receives a knock on his door from one of his former clients, begging for a scene. Desperate for some contact, Berkowitz pulls out two gloves and perseveres. The result is a very hot scene and a eureka-like recognition. It dawns on Berkowitz that a world without sex is not worth living in. Prohibition is often more dangerous than acknowledgment, careful expression and prevention. It had never occurred to Berkowitz, Callen or Sonnabend that latex offered the life saving compromise needed. From here Berkowitz and Callen build on the lessons of gay liberation to draft "How to Have Sex in an Epidemic." The result is a revolution allowing for personal and political protection and cover for both sex and the liberation movement that dismantled the shackles around it. Queer theorists to this day still look to this seminal essay.

Despite its strengths as a story, there are limitations with *Stayin' Alive*. The author recalls that he basically finished the book in 1993, had Michael Callen read through it, and stopped writing. It shows. With the exception of an introduction that reads like it should have been an afterward, Berkowitz does not substantially account for the battles over prevention within the gay men's sex wars which ensued over safer sex that played out throughout the 1990s. The problems that have unfolded around safe sex can and should be addressed in both practice and research, especially around the development of microbicides to replace latex. Condoms are not a sufficient lifelong

solution. These are nuances that Berkowitz fails to address. Yet, as an alternative to abstinence-only programs, safer sex still presents a viable workable strategy.

**Benjamin Shepard** is a frequent contributor to *Lambda Book Report*.

## Connecting the Dots

### Come Out Fighting: A Century of Essential Writing on Gay & Lesbian Liberation

Edited by Chris Bull

Thunder's Mouth Press/Nation Books

ISBN 1560253258

PB, \$17.95, 362 pp.

#### Reviewed by Benjamin Shepard

After what seems like years of debating what's wrong with the ideas of Andrew Sullivan, Gabriel Rotello, Michelangelo Signorile and the other self-appointed "we're just like them" spokespeople of today's calcified gay journalism (the "turdz," the pro-sexual expression group Sex Panic! called them back in 1997), it's wonderful to dig back through the annals of history to read testaments of what is actually right—that is, what's important for aesthetics, personal liberty and American democracy—about gay liberation.

Chris Bull's wonderful new edited volume, *Come Out Fighting*, features many of the texts which articulated the social and political underpinnings of gay liberation. From poet Walt Whitman and anarchist Emma Goldman's democratic visions, to sexologist Havelock Ellis and psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud's sympathetic readings of sexual "inversion," to SDSer-turned-libera-

tionist Carl Whitman and Black Panther leader Huey Newton's writings on the political importance of liberation, Bull presents the primary documents which made Americans rethink their notions of homosexuality and, by extension, their notions of tolerance for difference itself.

Building on the liberationist era's ethos that citizens should have the right to make decisions about their own bodies, Supreme Court Justice and *Roe vs. Wade* author Harry Blackmun opposed sodomy laws. This volume features Blackmun's principled dissent in *Bowers v. Hardwick*, which the editor suggests lays the groundwork for Justice Anthony Kennedy's 1996 majority opinion in *Romer vs. Evans*.

Bull's volume presents a number of documents from the gay liberation period of the late 1960s and early 1970s as the movement sought linkages with Third World struggles, Black Power, feminism and other leftist movements. Despite the barriers, converts emerged. Take Black Panther Huey Newton. The volume features his 1970 letter asking the Black Panthers to get over their "insecurities" and recognize the interconnected nature of oppression:

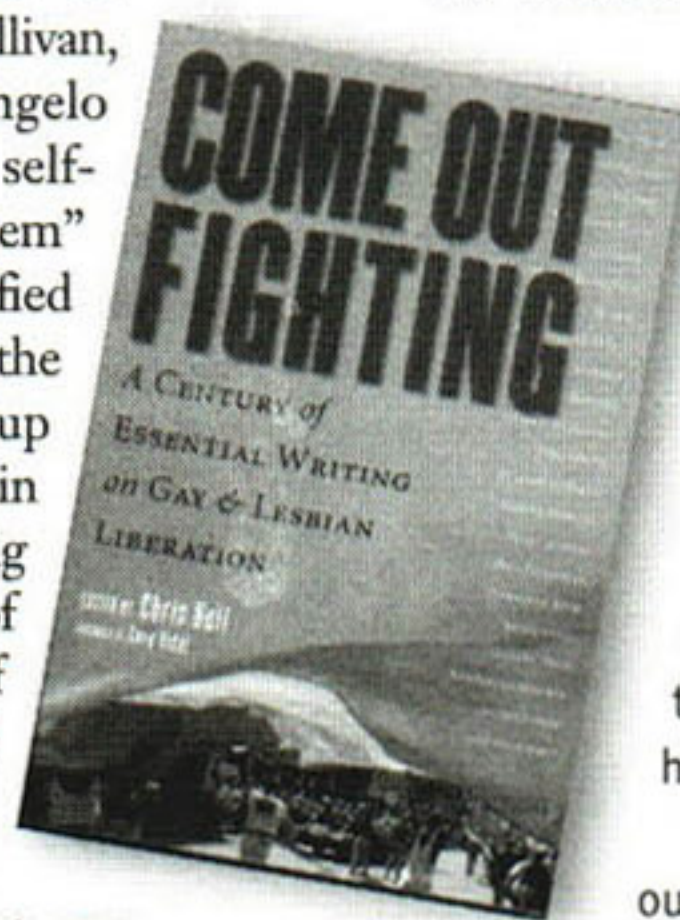
I say "Whatever your insecurities are" because, as we very well know,

sometimes our first

instinct is to want to hit the homosexual in the mouth because we're afraid we might be homosexual; and we want to hit the woman and shut her up because we're afraid that she might castrate us, or take the nuts that we might have to start with.

We must gain security in ourselves and therefore have respect and feelings for all

oppressed people.... I don't remember us ever constituting any value that said that a revolutionary must say offensive things towards homosexuals, or that a revolutionary should make sure that women do not speak out about their own particular kind of oppression. Matter of fact, it's just the opposite: we say that we recognize





the woman's right to be free. We have not said much about the homosexual at all... Homosexuality is a fact that exists, and we must understand it in its purest form. That is, a person should have freedom to use his body in whatever way he wants to.

Newton's linkage of the colonization of bodies with homophobia and women's oppression was prominently considered in the early queer theoretical tract *Homosexual Desire* by Guy Hocquenghem. It was only a short step from queer liberation to queer theory. Many texts which later served as the basis for the queer theoretical framework are included here, including writing by Michel Foucault, and Richard Berkowitz and Michael Callen's still essential HIV prevention tract, "How to Have Sex in an Epidemic."

As with all anthologies, some contributions—such as the letter by the Human Rights Campaign's Elizabeth Birch—do not seem to fit. And there are glaring omissions, such as the voice of any transgender activists. Recall what Stonewall veteran Sylvia Rivera had to say about Birch's HRC before her death: "One of our main goals right now is to destroy the Human Rights Campaign, because I'm tired of sitting on the back of the bumper."

On the other hand, the volume's inclusion of delightful historical essays, such as Susan Sontag's "Notes on Camp," is quirky and inventive. "What is extravagant in an inconsistent or an unpassionate way is not Camp," Sontag states, elaborating on the uncontrollable, often queer sensibility that propels cultural production. "Neither can anything be Camp that does not seem to spring from an irrepressible, a virtually uncontrolled sensibility. Without passion, one gets pseudo-Camp..." It is not a stretch to link this sentiment with Vito Russo's simultaneous passion for show tunes and the irrepressible anger which helped drive the early vision of ACT UP.

Taken as a whole, *Come Out Fighting* is a terrific tool for cultural critics, queer theorists, and activists alike.

**Benjamin Shepard** is a frequent contributor to *Lambda Book Report*.

## Petri Dish

### The Crimson Letter: Harvard, Homosexuality, and the Shaping of American Culture

By Douglass Shand-Tucci

St. Martin's Press

ISBN 0312198965

HB, \$27.95, 416 pp.

#### Reviewed by Michael Hattersley

Douglass Shand-Tucci's *The Crimson Letter* contains the raw materials for a good and important book. Shand-Tucci's essential premise—that gay sensibilities played an important role at Harvard from the early Nineteenth Century on and helped shape American culture and homosexuality—is indisputable. Shand-Tucci demonstrates that many of the people who helped define America—from Ralph Waldo Emerson and Walt Whitman through Henry James and George Santayana to Virgil Thompson, Amy Lowell, Bernard Berenson, S. Foster Damon (the great Blake scholar), Lincoln Kirstein (the founder of the New York City Ballet), Leonard Bernstein, Philip Johnson and many more—developed their genius under the influence of a homophilic coterie at Harvard that perpetuated itself to the present day.

Shand-Tucci deduces two main models of homosexuality passed down through generations of gay/bisexual Harvard professors and students: Walt Whitman's "Warrior Archetype" and later Oscar Wilde's "Aesthete Archetype." Up to a point, these are useful categories to describe the evolving self-definition of gay males in America. One might project these categories to suggest that Whitman's manly comrades had evolved into circuit muscle boys and Wilde's aesthetes had proliferated into the camp gay parodies currently beloved of TV sitcoms and "reality" shows.

Full disclosure: I taught management communication at the Harvard Business School from 1985 to 1993. In my first year, there was a tradition in each of the nine sections of ninety students to publish a "sky-deck news" written anonymously by students who sat as far as possible from the professor in the law school-like arena. The last issue, published in May, featured me being fucked by the (male straight) "Section Head," as well as a talented black female professor behaving like a craven house slave. This was too much for the administration, which slapped the guilty students on the wrist and shut down the "sky-deck news" tradition forever. The students were sent to meet with me, and they accepted my verdict that they'd been really stupid.

But that turned out not to be the end of the story. The following August, the president of the undergraduate Afro-American Student Association called me and said that, in protest of the treatment of the black professor, an article about these outrages would be published in the first edition of the *Harvard Crimson*, the campus newspaper. He asked me if it would humiliate me if the whole story was published. I said not at all.

The administration, which had gotten wind that the article was coming out, actually called me and offered to put my lover and I up in a hotel to protect us from the publicity. I met with the senior academic dean and told him, to his obvious shock, that I intended to use the *Crimson* article as the first "case" in my upcoming course to demonstrate how communication could reach unintended audiences and go horribly wrong. I did so a week

later, with terrific results. Two years later, I was appointed Course Head.

The point of this personal digression is that a subtext of Shand-Tucci's book is true. With some notable exceptions, Harvard has consciously although nervously nurtured a gay subculture and, with some serious exceptions, looked the other way when it was not

